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RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

NEWS

"We must open wider the doors of opportunity....
for the good of our country and all our people"
President Eisenhower

U. S. Department of Agriculture

Washington, D. C.
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No. 3

STATE PROGRAMS -- A CONTINUING REPORT: In the previous issue of the News we listed States whose Deans of Agriculture had reported on organization for Rural Development Programs and other plans to help small farmers. Letters have since come in from several other States. They are summarized below.

California: H. R. Wellman, Vice President for Agricultural Sciences, University of California, says the State has had a program for several years to aid a small number of families of agricultural workers. "The poor living standards of these families has long been a problem in this State. We expect to expand this program."

New Mexico: Dean Robert A. Nichols reports that a meeting was held August 19 of representatives and agencies servicing agriculture in the State. The group decided to organize an advisory committee for programs affecting agriculture, with a special subcommittee on rural development. "Efforts will be primarily devoted to developing the appropriate organizational setup in the field for the best cooperation and program coordination possible."

New York: Dean William I. Myers of Cornell reports that Clifford R. Harrington, Assistant County Agent Leader, will be responsible for work that might be done to improve the opportunities of underemployed farmers. "...we are anxious to see," Dean Myers writes, "what can be done to give further help in the counties of this State which have substantial numbers of underemployed, low-income farmers."

Illinois: Dean Louis B. Howard writes that Extension supervisors and specialists have discussed the program in the State. Three counties -- Pope, Hardin, and Jackson -- have been singled out as "most logical for the work of this type at the present time." The plan is to employ an assistant farm advisor who will study the situation and help local people develop a program. "Present farm income increases in these counties," he observes, "seem to rest largely in improved production on farms, along with much stress on improved quality products."

North Dakota: The Director of the Agricultural Experiment Station, Glenn C. Holm, writes that projects already in operation at the station will provide information for the State Extension Service in its approach to the Rural Development Program.

Iowa: The State has a number of farmers with low incomes because of inefficient units, lack of managerial skills, and other reasons, says Dean Floyd Andre. "Over the years the various agricultural groups have considered this problem as part of their program." Although no special organization will be set up, "the resources of the several agencies can be effectively used within the framework of their present program..."

Maine: Dean Arthur L. Deering describes efforts to meet the problem in the State and the attempt to develop new agricultural enterprises to increase income. "We have recently purchased a farm for experimental purposes and are developing a strong research program for those particular areas...where low incomes prevail."

Vermont: Dean J. E. Carrigan writes that representatives of a group of State and Federal agencies dealing with agriculture have been meeting during the past year to discuss the land-use situation and problems. As an initial step, the Rural Development Program will be brought before this group at their next meeting.

West Virginia: Another State meeting is planned for September 30.

Arkansas: Two meetings of the State Rural Development Committee will be held October 4, according to a further report from Dean Lippert S. Ellis.

As this News goes to press, 21 States have reported on work with small farmers. Organizations are being set up for Rural Development Programs with State advisory committees. As these reports show, there is widespread activity -- it is not confined to States where the problem of low rural incomes is most serious.

Letters from State officials reflect widespread agreement on the scope of the problem and the need for special efforts to remedy it. Many officials describe what has been done recently to help small farmers and stress the importance of Extension's farm-unit approach in this kind of program.

IMPORTANT ROLE OF STATE PLANNING AGENCIES: Secretary Benson's report on the development of agriculture's human resources points up the need for industrialization and off-farm job opportunities in many low-income areas.

Victor Roterus, Director of the Office of Area Development, Department of Commerce, emphasizes the work of State planning and development agencies in forwarding industrial development. "These State agencies," he says, "can play a vital role in the success of Rural Development Programs. They can make valuable contributions to any State groups providing leadership in the program."

TEXAS MEETING OF FARM PLACEMENT OFFICERS: Representatives of the Department of Labor will meet early next year in San Antonio, Texas, with State and regional farm placement personnel to discuss their operations. A major agenda item will be programs to meet the long-range needs of farm people who want to move out of over-populated low-income rural areas.

"In the meantime," according to a Department spokesman, "regular placement activities will be stepped up. The Department of Labor is continuing to work on plans to carry out the President's recommendations for the development of agriculture's human resources."

HEW REGIONAL DIRECTORS TO DISCUSS PROGRAM: Regional directors of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare will meet in Washington the last week of September to discuss Department programs, including operations under the Rural Development Program. Cooperation between the Department, other Federal agencies, and State agencies in the Rural Development Program and coordination of operations in whatever pilot counties might be named are important items on the agenda.

CONGRESSIONAL AUTHORITY FOR SPECIAL AID: In a letter last month to State Extension Directors, Luke M. Schruben, Assistant Administrator of the Federal Extension Service, reported on Congressional authorization for special aid to farmers with low incomes. The authorizing legislation, which provided for a new section in the Smith-Lever Act, pointed out that certain farm areas are at a disadvantage in agricultural development. To encourage development in these areas, "there are hereby authorized to be appropriated such sums as the Congress from time to time shall determine to be necessary for payments...on the basis of special needs in such areas as determined by the Secretary of Agriculture." As the News reported before, no additional funds were appropriated for this purpose in the last session of Congress. If you want a copy of Mr. Schruben's letter, write the Office of Information, USDA, Washington 25, D.C.

CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS ON LOW RURAL, URBAN INCOMES: Senator John Sparkman of Alabama is chairman of a special Congressional Subcommittee that will hold hearings November 18 to 23 on the continuing low-income status of some rural and urban families in the Nation. Senator Ralph E. Flanders of Vermont and Representative Augustine B. Kelley are the other members of the Subcommittee. They will study ways to increase the productive capacity and level of earnings of these families. Department of Agriculture representatives are expected to testify during the hearings.

The last issue of the News reported on a family farm study that will be made by a Special House Subcommittee headed by Representative Clark W. Thompson of Texas. These activities on the part of Congress should lead to proposals for more action, backed by appropriations, to help low-income farmers.

NEGRO EXTENSION WORKERS LOOK TO PROGRAM: Farm and home demonstration agents in the South are hopeful that the Rural Development Program will forward their work with Negro farmers, according to a report of Sherman Briscoe, USDA, Office of Information, who recently traveled in ten Southern States.

"While the small farmers face an up-hill fight," he writes, "the owners of adequate family-size farms are more confident than ever about their future in agriculture. They are optimistic because they feel that they now have the farming know-how." If you want a copy of Mr. Briscoe's 3-page report on Negro farmers in the South, write the Office of Information, USDA, Washington 25, D. C.

THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM is rolling ahead. During the next few months Congressional committees and meetings of important national groups will take up the problem of low-income farming and the Rural Development Program at some of their sessions. The following partial list illustrates the growing activity:

October 4: The National Conference on Public Policy in Green Lake, Wisconsin, will feature a discussion of the problems of farmers with low incomes. The Conference is sponsored by the Farm Foundation.

October 6 to 13: A Special 15-member Congressional Subcommittee studying family farming will travel by bus through part of the low-income farm area and hold hearings in the South.

October 18 to 20: A National Convocation on the Church in Town and Country in Springfield, Mass., will hear a discussion of the Rural Development Program in an address, "New Opportunities for Church Leadership," by Under Secretary True D. Morse. The Home Missions Division of the Council of Churches will sponsor the Convocation.

November 15: The Land-Grant College Conference at Michigan State University will discuss servicing the family-type farm.

November 18 to 23: Congressional hearings will be held on the low-income status of some American families. (See page 3 of this News)

November 13 to 15: A workshop on rural development at Tuskegee Institute will be attended by representatives from the USDA and Southern States.

December 2: At the 4th Annual National Agricultural Credit Conference, sponsored by the American Bankers' Association in Chicago, there will be a discussion of the role of credit in the Rural Development Program.

December 6: The Missouri Extension Conference will consider Extension's job as it relates to the development of agriculture's human resources.

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